CALIBER PRESS
NEGATIVE BURN
PAUL DULACY • BRIAN BOLLAND • PHILLIP HESTER • TED SLAMPYAK • DOUG WHEELER • RICHARD CASE
STEVE HATTESON

NEGATIVE BURN

VOLUME ONE
NUMBER SEVEN

an anthology
Joe Pruett / Editor

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FFWD/CUE
STEVE MATTSSON · WRITER
PAUL GULACY · ARTIST
DAVID JACKSON · LETTERER
IT DON'T LOOK EXACT ... GONNA BE ANOTHER BLOODY MESS!
Nobody else knows how tedious it is, always being right (I hope I'm wrong). *
unexpected events are precious to me.
IT'S THE WAY THE NEW BOOK SAID TO ... IT'LL WORK.
MEOW
EVERYBODY SHUT UP AND CONCENTRATE — I DON'T WANT TO DO THIS AGAIN!
SATAN GRANT US MUSIC WE CAN SELL...
I hadn't seen Cindy for awhile, so I wasn't bothered when she called me to help find her cat.
I had a lot to do, but needed to get away.
* EXCERPTS FROM THE VITRUVIAN MAN'S JOURNAL ; VOL. VII, # 2.

I didn't expect this!
...ALONG THE HIGH WAY TO HELL!
THAT'S MY SISTER'S CAT.
I'm in heaven.
SHE WANTS IT BACK.
YOU'RE TRESPASSING, MAN— WE COULD KILL YOU AN NOT GET INTO TROUBLE!
I gave them my injurious stare.
SORRY! WE, LIKE, DIDN'T KNOW...YOU KNOW —WHOSE CAT IT WAS!! YOU C'IN TAKE IT AND GO...
I knew it would work.
I wanted it to last longer.
THAT'S RIGHT...
I THINK YOUR MUSIC SUCKS!

BASTARD!
I love being irresponsible!
YOU'RE LUCKY I'M NOT ANGRY.
LEAVE US ALONE!
THIS IS SO INTENSE!
MY H-HANDS...
I'M STILL NOT ANGRY.
O-DON'T!
Actually, I do like Heavy Metal...

...I like it's violent imagery.
N-NO... STOP!
AARGGG! MY ELBOW!!
IS WAY TO REAL A DEAL— GOTTA FIX IT!
BASTARD!
YOU ALREADY SAID THAT.
THANKS.
I knew the fourth one was in the bathroom, but he seemed so peaceful.

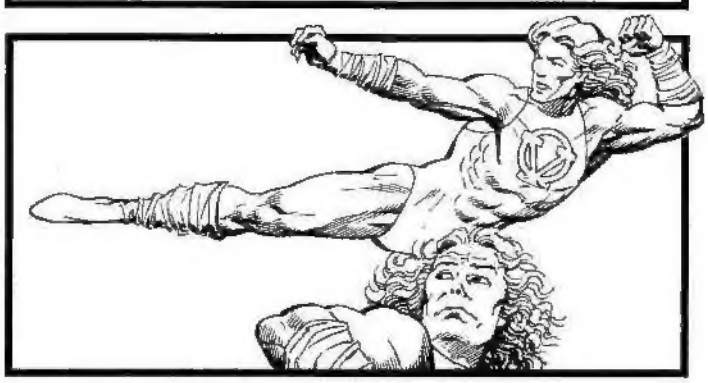
Drugs...
M-M-M-MY TURN! MY TURNNNN!!
...I'm going to check into them as a last resort for my own agents.
He was a lot of fun, but I really needed to take the cat home and get back to work.

EPILOGUE:
Lopez was my organization's best, brilliant and talented, but he could be a real bitch.
...ALSO, YOU MISSED APPOINTMENTS WITH THE NEW FAN CLUB OFFICERS, YOUR LITERARY AGENT, AND SGT. MAJOR BRICK. SOME NEW SURVEILLANCE TAPE IS IN FROM TORONTO, AND BETH CALLED — I TOLD HER YOU'D BEEN KILLED.
I CAN WATCH THE TAPE NOW, AND NONE OF THAT OTHER STUFF IS IMPORTANT, SO WHAT'S WITH THE HOSTILITY?
I'M SORRY... IT'S JUST THAT YOU DON'T SEEM TO HAVE TIME FOR ME ANYMORE.
I MADE NO PROMISES!
I always knew I'd eventually need to break in a new man.
WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A COUPLE OF MONTHS OFF, LOPEZ?
It's lonely at the top.
END

VITRUVIAN MAN

Real name: Dr. Eugene Shock
Occupation: Doctor, lawyer, professional adventurer
Identity: Secret
Legal status: Citizen of the United States with no criminal record
Other aliases: None
Place of birth: Portland, Oregon
Marital status: Single
Known relatives: Albert Shock (father), Elizabeth LeGore (mother), Cynthia Shock (sister), Philip LeGore (step-father)
Group affiliation: Former agent of the Central Intelligence agency, CEO of The Vitruvian Man Fan Club Inc.
Base of Operations: Vitruvian Man maintains offices in Brussels, Belgium; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Canberra, Australia; Hong Kong, Nairobi, Kenya; Portland, Oregon; and Washington D.C.
First appearance and origin:
DARK HORSE PRESENTS #7
History: Named for the drawing by da Vinci of the man in the circle and square, little is publicly known of Vitruvian Man's early career. It has been said that he worked clandestinely for the CIA until the deaths, in rapid succession, of Agent Justine Cook, his original CIA contact and her replacement. He went very public with the Burger City hostage rescue in Vancouver, WA. The movies and comic books followed, but the amount of high profile deeds did not slacken. The Vitruvian Man Fan Club was founded and became a world-wide phenomenon. The cream of the members became part of V-Man's inner circle. With ten of thousands of devotees around the globe, V-Man's influence has increased to what some would call dangerous levels.
Height: 6' 2"
Eyes: Blue
Weight: Variable
Hair: Blonde
Strength level: Vitruvian Man's strength varies with the type of body he has developed. At his peak he is as strong as humanly possible.
Known superhuman powers: Vitruvian Man has control of his body down to the cellular level. He can approximate the effects of a total body workout instantly. By willing his cells old cells to die, he stimulates the growth of new stronger ones. Depending on the type of body he needs, he can work toward strength, speed, flexibility, or a combination of all three. This control also makes him a master of disguise. He can change the amount of pigment in his skin. He can make his hair fall out and grow back (if he has been eating right). By rerouting fluids in his face he can completely change his features.
Abilities: Vitruvian Man's neural pathways can memorize a sequence after only one stimulus, so he does not need to practice. One bull's-eye with a .357 magnum and he will never miss with that weapon again. Total recall allows V-Man to master the more cerebral arts as well. He spends large amounts of his time expanding his repertoire. Among the many skills he has mastered are all known martial arts systems, gymnastics, varieties of dance, most musical instruments, languages and chess.
Weapons: Vitruvian Man is proficient with nearly all (ancient, modern, and experimental) hand-held weapons. He carries a variety of arms depending on his objective, but always seems to have a 9 mm Sig Saur P228 automatic pistol, a Bali-Song Benchmade AFO switchblade and an Asp extendible tactical baton.
Paraphernalia: Vitruvian Man often conceals undetectable plastic lock-picks, tools, and signaling devices in his flesh.

VITRUVIAN MAN



MR. MAMOULIAN

SCORPIONS

BSWLAND 87

YOU SEE THIS SHOE BOX ?
?
THIS SHOE BOX IS THE WORLD
?
AND INSIDE THE BOX THERE ARE TWO SCORPIONS
ONE IS CALLED RUSSIA
AND THE OTHER IS CALLED AMERICA
EACH ONE HAS A POWERFUL NEED TO SURVIVE, BUT IT KNOWS THAT THE OTHER HAS A DEADLY STING POINTED IN ITS DIRECTION
EACH ONE WOULD PREFER TO WALK AWAY AND LIVE A PEACEFUL LIFE, BUT IT KNOWS THAT WHEN ITS BACK IS TURNED THE OTHER WOULD STRIKE
THE ONLY HOPE IS TO STRIKE FIRST EVEN THOUGH EACH WILL DIE IMPALED BY THE OTHER'S STING.
THEY ARE NEITHER GOOD NOR BAD...
THEY ARE JUST SCORPIONS
DON'T GO AWAY. I'LL BE BACK IN A MINUTE
SHOES!

Jazz Age Chronicles
BY TED SLAMPYAK
HIATUS
JEEZ.
DETECTIVE
IT FEELS LIKE OVER A YEAR SINCE ANYTHING HAPPENED AROU HERE.
TM, ©1992 TED SLAMPYAK
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

DON'T BE SO DRAMATIC; IT'S BEEN THREE DAYS.
GIVE YOUR ANKLE TIME TO HEAL.
AND I STILL SAY YOU SHOULD SEE A DOCTOR.

DOCTORS. WHAT A LOAD OF OUCH! BUNK. I DON'T NEED A DOCTOR.
YOU CAN'T AFFORD A DOCTOR.

OF COURSE, IF YOU HAD INSURANCE...

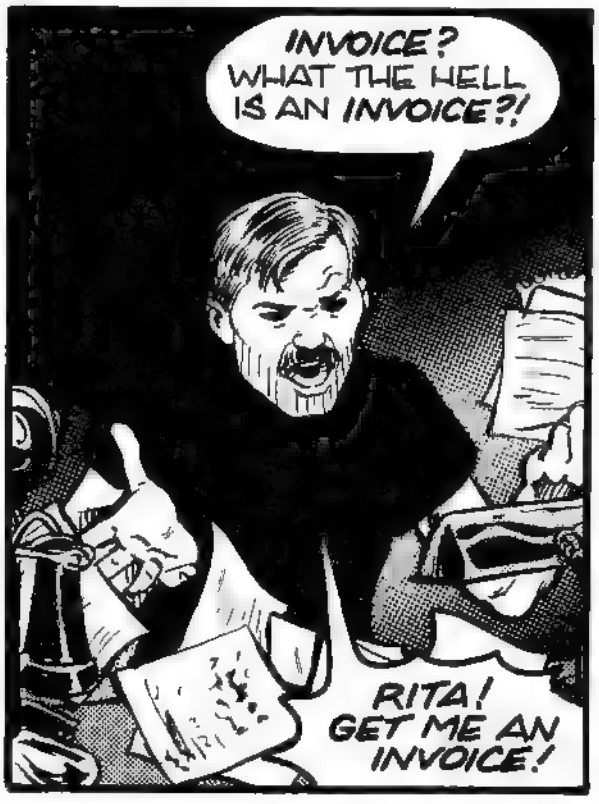
DON'T START WITH ME, RED!

-OH, PROF. JENNINGS!
MIFFLIN, PROF. JENNINGS IS --*
SEND HIM IN, MISS BURNS.

YES, PROFESSOR! WHAT CAN I DO YOU FOR?
Mr. MIFFLIN, I HAVE AN ASSIGNMENT FOR YOU. A SIMPLE ONE, REALLY.
BEEN TIDYING, I SEE.
IT INVOLVES MOSTLY LEGWORK..

HEY, I AIN'T WORKIN' FOR YOU AGAIN, PAL!
NOT 'TIL YOU PAY ME FOR THAT LAST JOB, OUT IN ARIZONA!

Mr. MIFFLIN, I CANNOT PAY YOU UNTIL I'VE RECEIVED AN INVOICE FOR YOUR SERVICES.

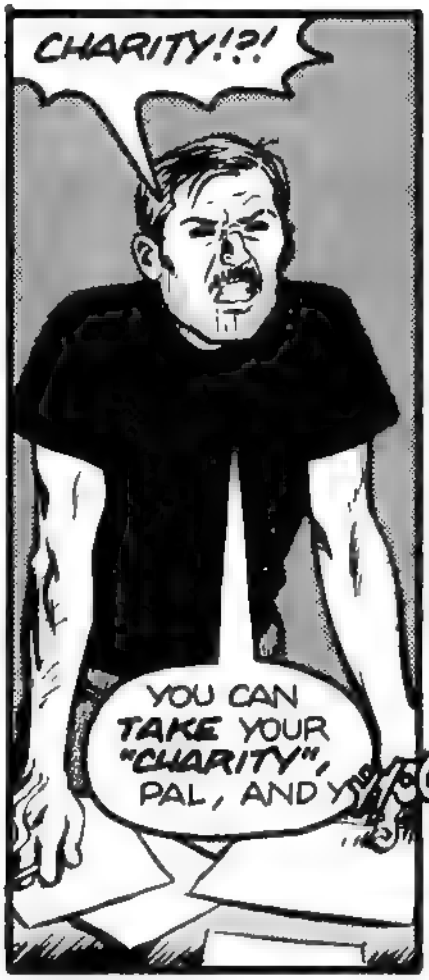

INVOICE? WHAT THE HELL IS AN INVOICE?!
RITA! GET ME AN INVOICE!

...NOW THIS TASK INVOLVES THE LOCATION OF THE DEED FOR AN ABANDONED PROPERTY NEAR GROTON.
THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAVE NO RECORD OF ITS OWNERSHIP--
SORRY, OLD BEAN. CAN'T HELP YA.

WHAT?
CAN'T HELP...?

Y'SEE, MY DOCKET'S ALL FULL UP! I'M JUST TOO BUSY AT THE MOMENT TO SQUEEZE YA IN.
BUT, THANKS FOR STOPPING BY!

YOU? TOO BUSY? THIS IS ABSURD!
I DO YOU A CHARITY BY OFFERING YOU THIS WORK, AND THIS IS THE THANKS I GET?
HERE'S AN ITEMIZED BILL FOR THE SAN PEDRO JOB.


CHARITY!?!
YOU CAN TAKE YOUR "CHARITY", PAL, AND Y

OOOOUCH!

JEEZ LOUISE...!

TAKE
DON'T
SINCE
YOU
HAVE I
OH, BROTHER, DON'T
STARTED
RD ASS!
ANOTH
HEAD!
STHIPIDEST
COW
OH YEA
McMULLAN
SUCK
BE

--HEY! THERE'S RONNIE!
YO, RONNIE! VERONICA, C'MON UP! YEAH, CLIFFY'S HERE!

MISS STONE!
I THOUGHT I'D LOST HER!

RITA BABY, WHAT CAN I TELL YOU? IT'S IN MY BLOOD!

BESIDES...

...IF YOU'RE GONNA DO NOTHING OOUCH! DO IT IN STYLE!

HOUND DOG BLUES

TOBIN HESTER

That's a good night to hear the blues.

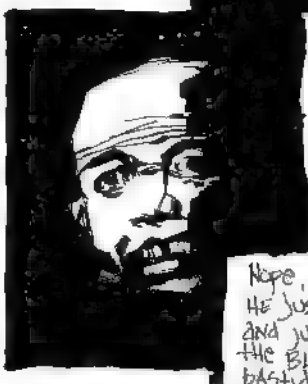
The first Friday of every month I mean that is, without a doubt the very best night for the blues.

'Cause that's the night that Will-am "Misty Eyes" Johnson brings his ol' Hound Dog in through the front door.

...where everyone can see 'im

And Misty shakes as many hands as want to be shaked and talks to as many people as want to be talked to. And that's usually more than a few. 'Course it's a mite important to pay attention to the Hound Dog too. After all, Misty been raising it fer a year and as usual done a pretty fine job. He got twelve o' them ol' hounds out to his shack. Some o' them jes' real pups. Some a mite older...

None so more than a year though.



But like I says it's pretty fair important to give that Friday hound a good deal of love. Misty likes it that way. Anyhows most times Misty just give ol' Carson his guitar and Carson for now puts it in the backroom where the pup be. Misty don't like to see that pup before'n he goes home with it in the cab of his '52.

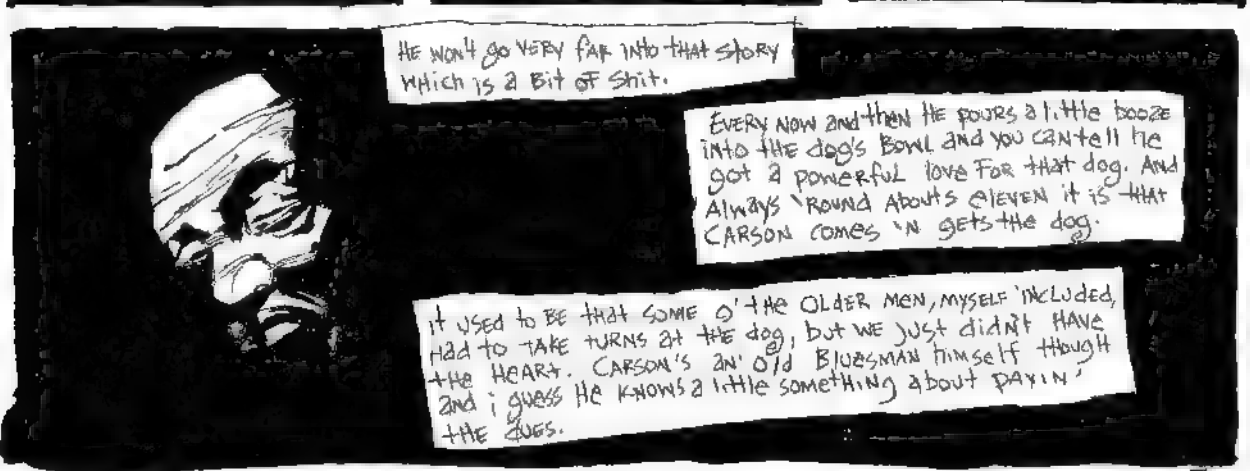
Nope, Misty don't like to play the blues right away. He just sits with that ol' hound dog at his feet and just spins these tales of how much better the blues were back before any of "ya crazy" bastids was a boner in yer daddy's pants.

See, he says bluesman today ain't got nothin' to sing the blues about. Too much money and easy livin'. A bluesman can't play the blues if'n he ain't rightly lived 'em. Like Misty done. He got stories about him and Jebidiah "Travellin'" Mann driving all the way to Louisiana to play the legendary concert with the Shoeshine Boys. He says they made their own guitars and more'n a couple o' woman along that road. Slept along the road and sang at the roadside gas stations for gas 'n money.

He tells a pretty damn fine story about the night he and Hog Throat Jenkins got a party broke up by the Klan. Tired o' runnin' through the woods, Jenkins had simply leaned up against a tree, pulled out that golden saxophone and the fuck if'n there'd ever been better Blues. Misty says that he himself just kept a runnin' and that he don't really know shit 'bout what happened to Hog Throat, but late that same night they was a fire in them woods.

And nothing but two weeks later he found Hog Throat's saxophone in a pawn shop from where Misty bought it and it sits in his home today. He says that it be kind of a bitch to have that sax around cause it sure as hell can't be a pla, n' it but he damn sure knows that it can play.

Ol' Misty sure has a lot of stories. He says that mebbe even more 'n a couple o' 'em might be true. You can even get him drunk enough on that homemade hooch that he might just let slip about a room, a woman, and that "crazy nigger Bob Johnson" bringin' a glass to his lips.


He won't go very far into that story which is a bit of shit.
Every now and then he pours a little booze into the dog's bowl and you can tell he got a powerful love for that dog. And always 'round about eleven it is that Carson comes 'n gets the dog.
It used to be that some o' the older men, myself included, had to take turns at the dog, but we just didn't have the heart. Carson's an' old Bluesman himself though and I guess he knows a little something about payin' the dues.

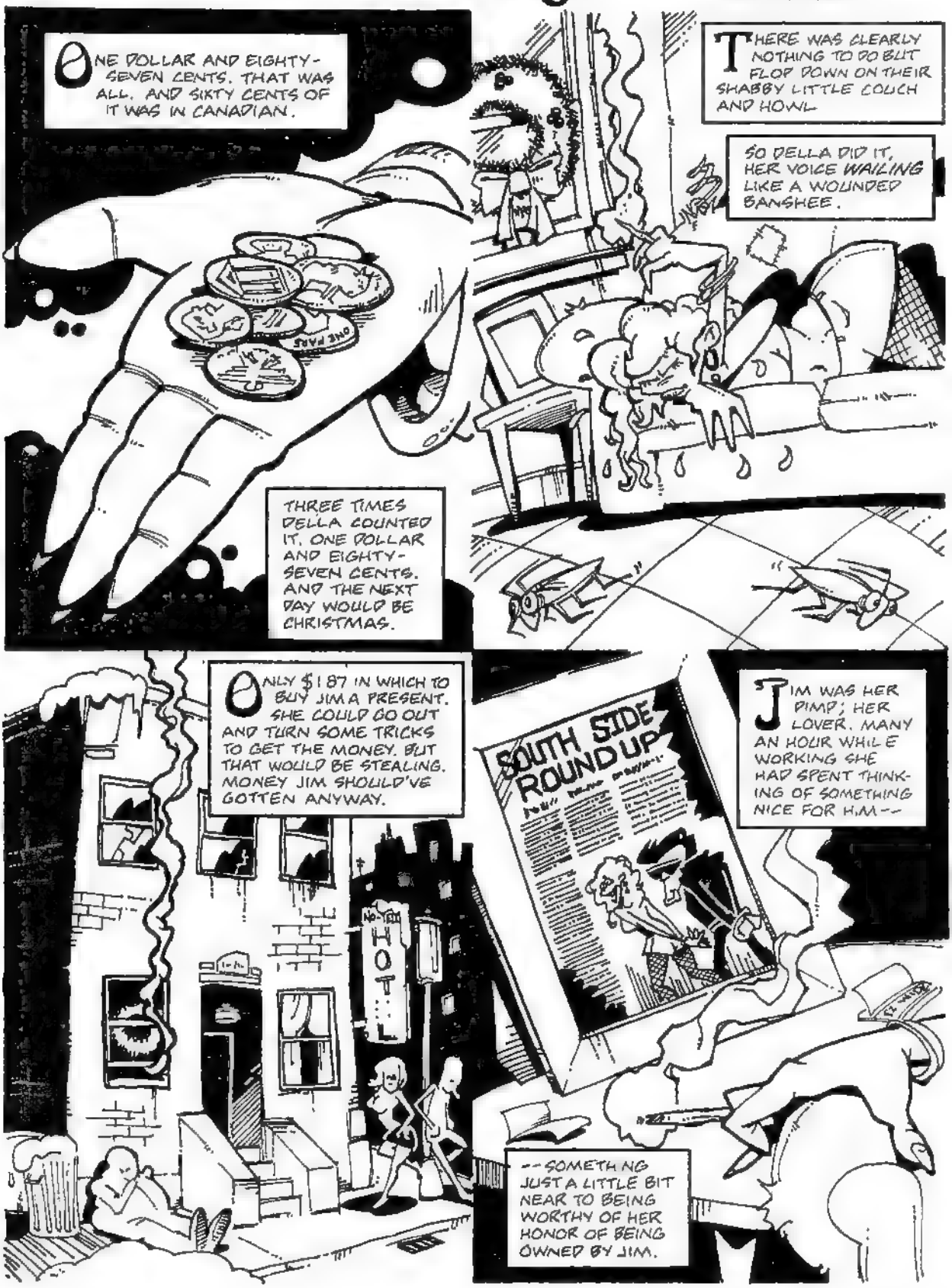
And Misty always starts off playing "Talkin' to Mr. Ford," a song he says he wrote fer Smokin' James Thornboy. And of course, Carson starts in on the hound, starts in on his muzzle that is.
When first Friday blues night began we always left the tongue fer last, but we all of us decided that the hounds made too much noise and drowned out much o Misty's blues. Then fer awhile, we, by this time meanin' Carson, would just wire the dogs muzzle shut, but then we could hear him hardly none at all. Nowadays Carson jus' cuts off 'bout half the tongue and puts a bolt through the dog's nuzzle to keep it half open.
Then Misty starts singing the bulk part of the show with songs like "Nigger Women" "Walking with the Hoofed Man" or "Bought Her for a Nickel" He just plays whatever blues he feels and Carson does much the same on the hound.
Sometimes he takes the dog's tail and rolls it on up. Or maybe he does open a leg or two and scrapes off a couple o' nerves or more.
Whatever.
'Course it done become a tradition for Misty to play "Shuffle in the dirt" when Carson takes off his paws and "Take a look at this" whenever Carson gets to takin' the dogs eyes out.
And o' course "Hound Dog Blues" is always the last song and that's sure always a sad sight. Misty playing on that guitar and singing while he watches Carson working on that ol' hound.
In fact you mebbe never seen a sadder sight.
But you damn sure never heard a man play better blues.

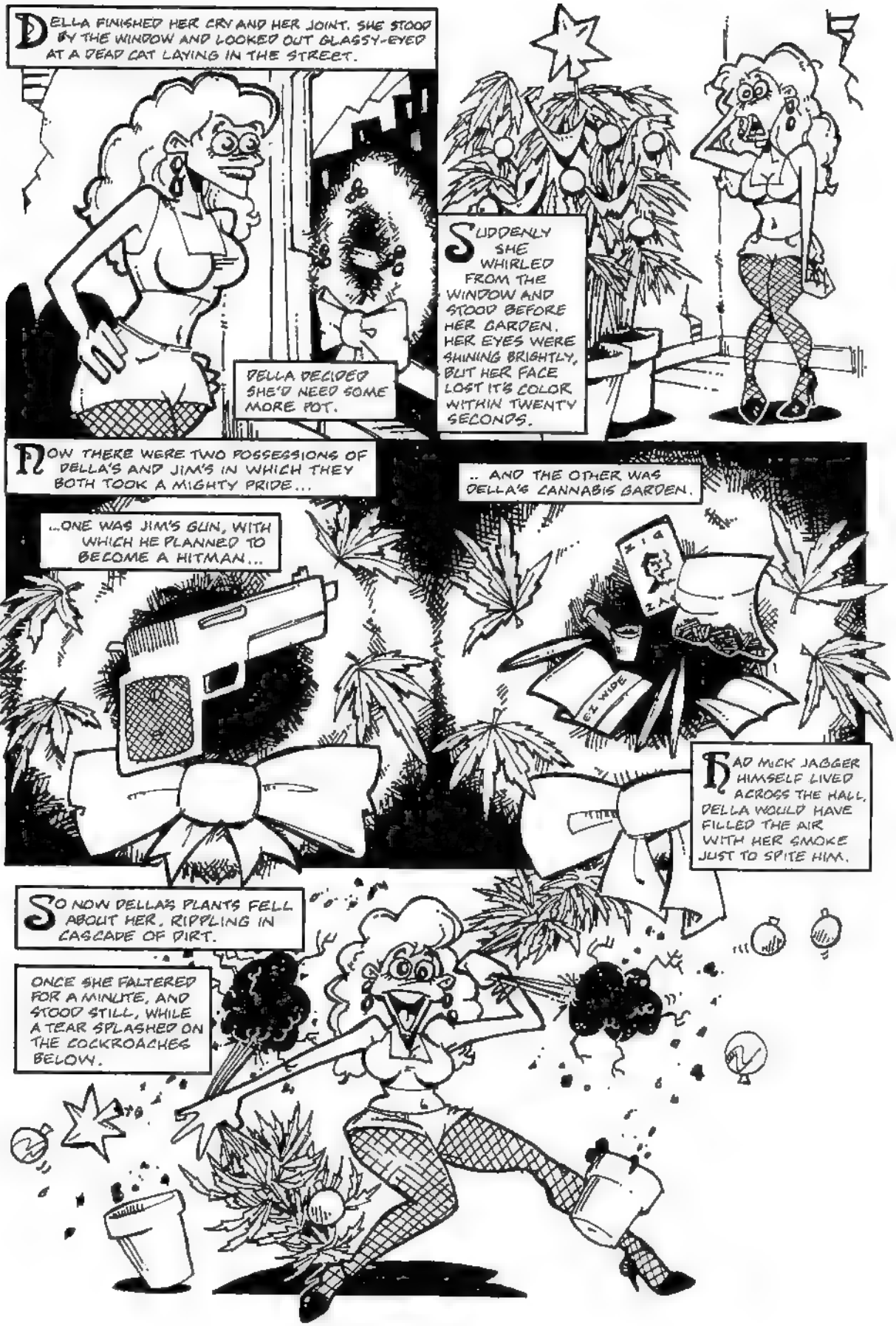
X

CLASSICS DESECRATED

"The Gift of the Magi"

DEBASED BY
DOUG WHEELER
AND
DAVID GATZMER
LETTERED BY
PAUL FRICKE


ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS. THAT WAS ALL. AND SIXTY CENTS OF IT WAS IN CANADIAN.
THERE WAS CLEARLY NOTHING TO DO BUT FLOP DOWN ON THEIR SHABBY LITTLE COUCH AND HOWL
SO DELLA DID IT, HER VOICE WAILING LIKE A WOUNDED BANSHEE.
THREE TIMES DELLA COUNTED IT. ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS. AND THE NEXT DAY WOULD BE CHRISTMAS.
ONLY $1.87 IN WHICH TO BUY JIM A PRESENT. SHE COULD GO OUT AND TURN SOME TRICKS TO GET THE MONEY. BUT THAT WOULD BE STEALING. MONEY JIM SHOULD'VE GOTTEN ANYWAY.
SOUTH SIDE ROUND UP
JIM WAS HER PIMP; HER LOVER. MANY AN HOUR WHILE WORKING SHE HAD SPENT THINKING OF SOMETHING NICE FOR HIM--
HOT
--SOMETHING JUST A LITTLE BIT NEAR TO BEING WORTHY OF HER HONOR OF BEING OWNED BY JIM.


DELLA FINISHED HER CRY AND HER JOINT. SHE STOOD BY THE WINDOW AND LOOKED OUT GLASSY-EYED AT A DEAD CAT LAYING IN THE STREET.
DELLA DECIDED SHE'D NEED SOME MORE POT.
SUDDENLY SHE WHIRLED FROM THE WINDOW AND STOOD BEFORE HER GARDEN. HER EYES WERE SHINING BRIGHTLY, BUT HER FACE LOST IT'S COLOR WITHIN TWENTY SECONDS.
NOW THERE WERE TWO POSSESSIONS OF DELLA'S AND JIM'S IN WHICH THEY BOTH TOOK A MIGHTY PRIDE...
...ONE WAS JIM'S GUN, WITH WHICH HE PLANNED TO BECOME A HITMAN...
.. AND THE OTHER WAS DELLA'S CANNABIS GARDEN.
EZ WIDE
BAD MICK JAGGER HIMSELF LIVED ACROSS THE HALL, DELLA WOULD HAVE FILLED THE AIR WITH HER SMOKE JUST TO SPITE HIM.
SO NOW DELLAS PLANTS FELL ABOUT HER, RIPPLING IN CASCADE OF DIRT.
ONCE SHE FALTERED FOR A MINUTE, AND STOOD STILL, WHILE A TEAR SPLASHED ON THE COCKROACHES BELOW.

WITH A WHIRL OF HER HIGH HEELS AND WITH THE GLASSY SPARKLE STILL IN HER EYES, SHE FLUTTERED OUT THE DOOR AND DOWN THE STAIRS TOWARDS THE STREET...
...FINALLY STOPPING WHEN SHE FOUND EDDIE MEESE'S ONE-MAN STORE.
ED MEESE DRUG GOODS of All KINDS
WHAT CAN I DO YOU, DELLA? HO, HO, HO!
WILL YOU BUY MY POT, EDDIE?
LE'ME STOKE UP A DOOBIE AND SEE.
FOR THE NEXT TWO HOURS SHE TRIPPED. DELLA KNEW EXACTLY WHAT SHE WANTED. SHE WAS RANSACKING THE BLACK MARKET FOR JIM'S PRESENT.
SHE FOUND IT AT LAST. IT SURELY HAD BEEN MADE FOR JIM AND NO ONE ELSE.
THE SMOKE WAS GOOD. LIFTING THE MASS WITH PRACTICED HAND, EDDIE MADE HIS OFFER. DELLA ACCEPTED.
WHEN DELLA REACHED HOME HER INTOXICATION WAS WEARING OFF A LITTLE TO REASON. SHE LOOKED AT THE RAVAGES MADE BY GENEROSITY ADDED TO LOVE.
PLEASE GOD, DON'T LET JIM KILL ME.
IT WAS A PLATINUM SILENCER FOR JIM'S GUN, SIMPLE AND CHASTE IN DESIGN.
WITH THAT SILENCER ON HIS GUN JIM MIGHT BE PROPERLY WELCOMED INTO ANY COMPANY. HIS DREAM OF BECOMING A HITMAN WOULD BE FULFILLED.

AT SEVEN O'CLOCK THE LIQUOR WAS OUT AND THE "FREEZER QUEEN" TV DINNERS THAWING. JIM WAS ALWAYS LATE.
DELLA DOUBLED THE SILENCER IN HER HAND AND WAITED FOR HIM, WHISPERING LITTLE SILENT PRAYERS TO HERSELF.
FINALLY, JIM CAME HOME
SLAM!
POOR FELLOW, HE WAS ONLY TWENTY-TWO -- AND ALREADY BURDENED WITH THREE CHILDREN FROM WHOSE MOTHERS HE WAS HIDING, AND A RAP SHEET THAT FILLED A CABINET.
JIM, DARLING, DON'T LOOK AT ME THAT WAY. I SOLD MY GARDEN BECAUSE I COULDN'T HAVE LIVED THROUGH CHRISTMAS WITHOUT GIVING YOU A PRESENT.
I'VE KEPT SOME SEEDS. IT GROWS AWFULLY FAST SAY "MERRY CHRISTMAS!" JIM, AND LET'S BE HAPPY.
YOU GOT RID OF THE POT ?!
PULLED IT OUT AND SOLD IT YOU NEEDN'T LOOK FOR IT. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT A NICE -- WHAT A BEAUTIFUL, NICE GIFT I'VE GOT FOR YOU.

JIM ENFOLDED HIS DELLA DISCREETLY. EIGHT BOOBIES A WEEK OR A MILLION A YEAR. -- WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE? A MATHEMATICIAN OR A JUNKIE WOULD GIVE YOU THE WRONG ANSWER.
YOU SAY THE POT IS GONE?
THE MAGI BROUGHT VALUABLE GIFTS, BUT THAT WASN'T ONE OF THEM. THIS DARK ASSERTION, COME OUT OF THE BLUE, CROPS UP AGAIN AT THE END...
. TRUST ME.
DON'T MAKE A MISTAKE, DELL, ABOUT ME. I DON'T NEED THE STUFF, I DON'T.
BUT IF YOU'LL UNWRAP THAT PACKAGE YOU MAY SEE WHY YOU HAD ME GOING AWHILE.
NIMBLE FINGERS TORE AT THE PAPER. AND THEN AN ECSTATIC SCREAM OF JOY; AND THEN, ALAS! A QUICK CHANGE TO HYSTERICAL TEARS, NECESSITATING ALL THE COMFORTING POWERS OF THE LORD OF THE FLAT.
SHUT UP!
FOR THERE LAY THE BONG THAT DELLA HAD WORSHIPPED. A BEAUTIFUL, FINE CRYSTAL BONG, WITH JADE RIMS -- JUST THE SHADE TO MATCH DELLA'S MISSING PLANTS.

CONVINCED BY THE PRESENT THAT JIM WOULDN'T KILL HER, DELLA EAGERLY NOW GAVE JIM HIS PRESENT.
ISN'T IT A DANDY, JIM? GIVE ME YOUR GUN. I WANT TO SEE HOW IT FITS.
I SOLD MY GUN TO BUY YOUR BONG.
THE MAGI WERE WISE MEN. THEY NEVER WOULD HAVE FALLEN FOR JIM'S TRICK. JIM LIED. HE STILL HAD THE GUN AND HE USED BOTH IT AND THE SILENCER ON DELLA AS SHE SLEPT.
BEING THE WISEST OF ALL, THE MAGI STAYED CLEAR OF THIS STORY, ESTABLISHING THEIR ALIBIS. THE MAGI NEVER GAVE GIFTS AS STUPID AS THESE.

About the Author

O. HENRY (alias "William Sydney Porter"; alias "Squeeky") left school at age fifteen to work in his uncle's drugstore. From drugs, he progressed to Rock and Roll, publishing Rolling Stone Magazine in 1894. Unfortunately Rock and Roll had yet to be invented, and the magazine went under for lack of readers. Fearful he might start his own band, the Victorian Ladies League had him thrown in prison for three years. Many of his stories from this prison period featured a mysterious character called "Big Bart", who would enter the story from apparently nowhere, carrying a jar of vaseline. In his later years, it was Porter's fear that "Big Bart" would soon invade his stories which caused him to cut them off prematurely, giving them the endings culled from nowhere which became known as O. Henry's trademark.

Richard Case

Sketchbook

MEANWHILE AT CLUB ZOOM...
WILL SHE EVER NOTICE ME? ...
WILL HE EVER NOTICE ME?

ONE'S A...
T-bird
that
the
olish
in the
Annie Ammo's
GREATEST CHALLENGE!
MOMMY
FUNNY!

TASTY!
A-MAN WICH w/ FRIES AND A LARGE COKE!

DRY MARTINI

Fill Martini pitcher with ice, ever so gently pour in 3 oz. of desert dry gin, now carefully open bottle of vermouth and let stand in room for 3 minutes and close, strain into a freshly chilled Martini glass and add 1 olive and a knot of lemon peel.

Editorial

At the 1992 San Diego Comic Con, a group of seven comics creators - Malcolm Bourne, Ji… Calafiore, Jeff Lang, Mark Lucas … Moore, Joe Pruett and Jame… decided to form a Creato… all knew each other to va… we were all at various po… "breaking in" to the busin… of working in isolation, s… or art board, putting in o… periodically sending subm… and generally waiting for … Along with a desire for increase… port and availability for c… munication, we shared a c… about comics. That philo… medium where anything can be done, any story can be told. And so Mad Hatter Studios was born, and now there are twelve of us, as we've …

Comics are, it is said, … by "superheroes". The "action/adventure" story makes up most of the market. Then there are a … "mystery" titles, a few "horror" comics, some "erotic" comics… and we finally remember who … There were a lot of "romance" comics and "western" comics but why the need for all the genres? Why this obsession with genre?

The world around us i… cally classified according … stories of those lives, simpl… catedly!) happen. We don… other in an "action/adven… hero" way. Sure, we may f… heroism, but these emoti… broader palette of human … of telling a story is to engage … whatever you're trying to comm… that story has a chance t… Even if the story is design… the reader needs to be dr…

Thinking of genres, it … provide emotional … or examples, and that is … with which we can all … Comics is graphic storytelling, storytelling …

tion with … rd… Mad … the potential … to be about … The … reason … might indeed mean that this is a perspective … for telling stories about human … fantastic ideas and outstanding graphics, rather … particular embodiment of "reality" … is equally as relevant for telling whatever story … fellow writers.

… when we discuss comics with other people, … someone whose training or profession … fellow writers a comic book, as a medium to … of the world as we see it, they … … are an aid to communication, to let the other … know a bit about the project's scope and … Such … stock … of … … But it does … to let those … … boundaries … and … … the … of what we can put into the story.

Negative Burn … many … … Some of them … … a … story, a fantasy story. Some of them … … and … … Then … "The Crow Design", … about an … … …

LETTERS

Carl Pietrantonio
517 Idylwood Lane
Laredo, Texas 78041

Dear Joe, Charles and folks,

Just picked up NEGATIVE BURN # 3. Very good indeed! The printing quality is excellent. It may seem funny that I mention that, but there are a great many B&W comics out there that on cannot say this about. What about the features? Well, I thought you would never ask...

Black Mist prelude. Strange. Very strange. Yet, I liked it, at least as a preview of what is to come. I take it that the Black Mist is a vengeance kind of entity that will try to stop the killing and mad violence that preva in the world of 1918 and maybe even later on? It was weird, but I will check it out. It is interesting enough t do so. The art was very good, with a fine use of silhouetting.

Mr. Mamoulian: This is a weird little thing. It's short enough that it gets a point across. I am not yet sure what that point is though. It is interesting though and not so long as to really take up too much room from anything else.

BONE **Sketches.** Hell, anything that will get more people to read BONE is great! I like being able to see how Jeff lays something out from start to finish. The two finished pages are good, yet there are so many others just as good. If Jeff isn't the heir apparent to Walt Kelly in his use of sha ow and backgrounds in this style of B&W artwork, then I don't know who is. Keep putting the message out t buy BONE.

The Great Frog Ball: Weird indeed! This guy is gonna marry a dead woman? Now that is strange. Is this just a shocker short piece, or is there more to come? Bizarre indeed.

Lazaretto VI: Interesting story, but the panel layouts made the story very hard to follow. I often didn't know which way to go. I think the story suffered a great deal because of this.

The Panic: Funny story in its own bizarre way. Rather short, but gets the job done.

Good cover! I liked it. All in all, NB # 3 was a good value for the money. I will be checking out the Black Mi comic when I can. Thanks! Great job by all concerned.

Good to hear from you again, Carl. I agree totally with your praise for Jeff Smith's BONE. It is absolutely one o the best comics being published today. No question about it. I also hope you found a copy of BLACK MIST #1 at y local comic shop, as they seemed to disappear off the shelves pretty quick. #2 should be out as you read this.

Larry Stark
117B Thorndike St.
Brookline, MA 02146

Dear NEGATIVE BURNers,

The spread of styles, both of story in general and of writing and drawing, is refreshing wide, and quality is uniform—so uniform that the "I like this, don't like that" decisions can be made on grounds of personal preference, not workmanship. Congratulations. That's harder than it looks.

I was amazed to see that Jim Calafiore drew "The Great Escape" in a style so unlike his Arthurian epic, or his pages of SINERGY. There's so much good white space here, and none of his excellent hand-shading effects anywhere. It's almost as though he was deliberately resisting any decorative possibilities in order to make the story shine even more clearly through the art. And the first and last pages become even doubly effective with the spatter-shading growing more and more intense.

The drawing of "Lazaretto VI," "The Great Frog Ball," and "Black Mist" impresses me more than the stories, which reflect back to modern horror-movies. I thought, however, that the story for "Kilroy Is Here" intrigued me more than the pictures. I do like the heavy emphasis of blacks and black page backgrounds though.

For me, probably the best balance of story and art is in "Dead Aim," which I think rings the most original changes on the caped-crusader theme I've seen in a long time. Style here is deliberately and positively reflective of the genre at its pre-Liefeld best.

I don't mean to imply a put-down by saying nothing about the other pieces. As I said, picking bests and worsts is a function of personal tastes, nothing more. That's why I've tried to emphasize that thin vertical pronoun. I mentioned in a note to Steven Tice that most reviewers treat their subjects the way male dogs do fireplugs, and for the same reason, I guess I'm not really an exception to my own rule, am I?

However, I will include my review of "Boneshaker"—one of several I sent Tice at MUSINGS, for a column I'd like to call "Reading the ART." No idea what may see print. My idea is to print a full page opposite a page of analysis, and I like the idea of contrasting Phillip Hester's drawing style with that of Colleen Doran in A DISTANT SOIL.

And, obviously, I hope NEGATIVE BURN succeeds as well. Now you'd better get back to work on the next issue!

P.S. Just what is your relationship to Caliber Press and Gary Reed? He's had his name on so many of my favorite black and whites—like FIRE, AIRWAVES, FRINGE, BAKER STREET, NEGATIVE BURN, and WINDWALKER. He seems to have had an excellent eye for good comic style—and apparently never enough money or distribution or readership to reap the success he deserves. I mean, just by reviewing comics I love, I may get stigmatized as a CALIBER flack! Tell him to do a "Great Eastern" in Boston sometime, so we can talk! And the two of you come, too!

I know I would love an excuse to get up to Boston again. Best of luck with MUSINGS. It was a great review of "Boneshaker" and I'll pass along a copy to Phillip.

I agree that Gary Reed has an exceptional eye for talent and is deserving of much more recognition tha he receives. I've never had any problems working wit Gary or anyone else at Caliber Press and look forwar to continuing our business relationship for a long tim to come. The money and exposure may not be the bes but the creative freedom you have at Caliber is tough to find anywhere else in today's market.

The ZONE CONTINUUM PRIMER

BE PREPARED
WHEN THE ZONES RETURN!

by Bruce Zick

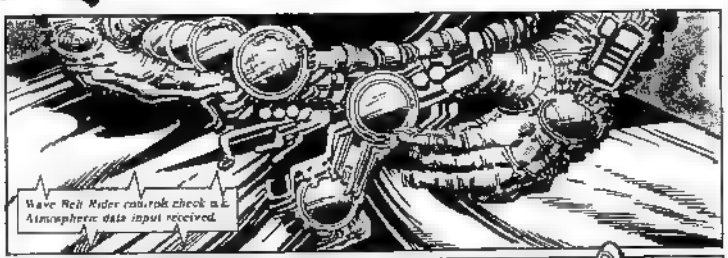
This is **TALON**, leader of an ancient race known as the PARTNERS. He lives high above the rooftop jungle of New York City in the shrinking confines of ZONE 27.

This is TALON'S ZONE EQUIPMENT:

HOT GLOVES

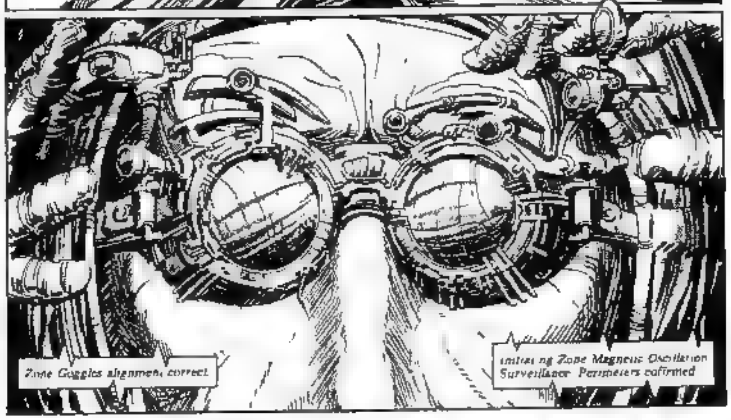
SKULL CAP

Skull Cap sync lock complete. Audio feedback established.
SPAR FATIGUE LEVEL NEGLIGIBLE ZONE PERIMETER STATUS CHECK IN PROGRESS. CHECKING STILL CHECKING
STANDBY



WAVE RIDER BELT

ZONE GOGGLES



ALL ZONE EQUIPMENT relays via BIT-LINK to BRONNIS at ROC'S NEST.

This is **BRONNIS**, the stalwart attendant who oversees TALON'S vast operations network.

BRONNIS and TALON live in an abandoned water tower.

The insides have been transformed into ROC'S NEST, the central nervous system for the world wide network of PARTNERS.

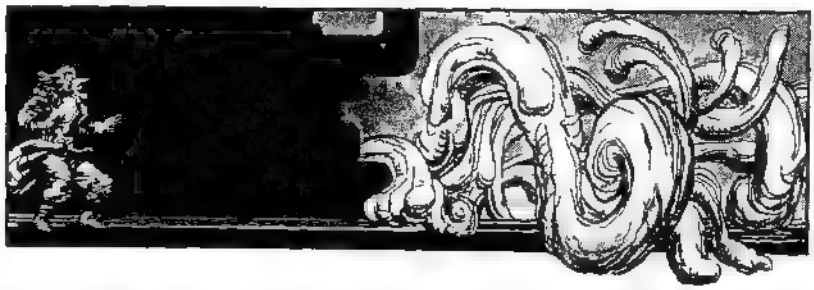
Once TALON and ROC'S NEST are linked, TALON is ready to take the leap, and ride the WAVES of the CONTINUUM. The waves are everywhere...treacherous and unstable. Only the constant stream of data from BIT-LINK keeps TALON'S equipment critically adjusted to the undulating Wave environment.

Talon's Zone Suit absorbs CONTINUUM energy like a solar collector, and provides the loft of a hang glider. The loft, or course, is adjustable thanks to the WAVE RIDER BELT controls.

To glide.
To be buffeted by the currents and eddies of the CONTINUUM.
Revel in the thrill -- a human body transformed by BIT-LINK into a cyber surfer. The magnetic forces surge into the BITALIC AMPLIFIERS, energizing the ZONE SUIT.
Light as a feather, riding the surge, sensing the flow.
To dance, to be...WAVE MASTER.

--IMPORTANT ZONE FACTS--

- Earth's global environment is subdivided into countless electro-magnet zones known as The ZONE CONTINUUM.
- The PARTNERS are magnetically attuned to their respective ZONE, and cannot pass the ZONE PERIMETERS without dying.
- All the ZONES are increasingly unstable and approach the cyclical planetary armageddon of polar reversal--THE CONTINUUM SHIFT.
- TALON wants to prevent the next CONTINUUM SHIFT from wiping out all humanity.
- Also affecting ZONE instability are all the natural and man made phenomenon, from volcanoes to micro-wave transmitters.



- ZONE Instability takes many dangerous forms, such as VIPERS, SPIKER WEAVES, BLACK STORMS and PERIMETER SURGES.
- The ZONE TECHS are in a technology race to create more advanced equipment to control or survive the chaotic ZONES.
- ZONE 27 is shrinking, and has just risen above the 150 foot altitude, or the fifteenth floor of the New York City metropolis.
- ZONE 27 just isn't big enough anymore for TALON...and SPERE.

This is SPERE

SPERE believes the CONTINUUM SHIFTS are natural and cleansing. He and his ZONE TECHS are trying to destroy TALON and the well hidden ROC'S NEST. Since a PARTNER may only be defeated according to the ancient OAR RITUAL of COMBAT, TALON and SPERE maneuver on the rooftops at night, searching for each other, setting traps, operating bizarre strategies--all the while dodging the wild and erratic dangers of the ZONE CONTINUUM.

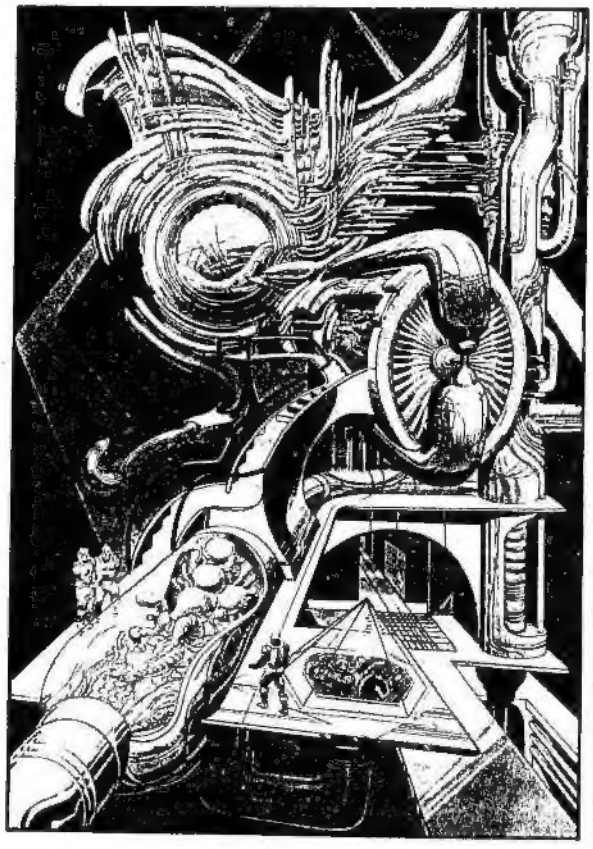
(THE STORY THUS FAR...)
SPERE has conducted an experiment that tests a device worn by a Partner to survive a ZONE PERIMETER BREACH.

It failed horribly.

AAAEEEEHHH

In the next issue of **ZONE CONTINUUM.**

TALON discovers the location of SPERE'S TECH LAB. But inside are dangers of a new and terrible technology-- The VIPER MATRIX.



Retrieving the vital data is the easy part. Destroying SPERE'S newest and most deadly project is difficult. Surviving the catastrophe may well be impossible.

Now you are prepared...for the RETURN OF THE ZONES. You are among the few, the fortunate, the informed. Use your knowledge wisely, but more importantly... enjoy THE ZONE CONTINUUM.

ZONE GLOSSARY

ATLANTIS BANK AND TRUST (AB&T): The multi-national conglomerate owned by Terrence Allen, the mysterious recluse.
BI-TALIC AMPLIFIERS: Micro-devices that directly convert magnetic energy into electrical power for ZONE EQUIPMENT.
BITLINK: The data transmission system from ROC'S NEST integrated into various ZONE devices.
BLACK STORM: A swirling pinwheel buildup of perimeter energy.
THE DAR: The race of ancients spread throughout earth, now known as PARTNERS. The DAR cannot be near a human for more than 30 minutes.
DIGITAL MATRIX DIMENSION: The cyberspace dimension that threatens the fabrice of the CONTINUUM.
THE FOAM: The infinite matter/anti-matter sea in an eternal cycle of creation and annihilation.
FOTZER: A Friend Of The ZONES. You know who you are.
MANX AMERICA: A street kid running from trouble who saved TALON'S life during a battle with SPERE, now living in ROC'S NEST.
NEURALNET: A form fitting mesh material of Tratium 141 and Carbon 60 that covers the body under the ZONE SUIT.
PARIS: TALON'S wife. She is trapped in ZONE 26, which is pulling away from TALON in ZONE 27.
PLASMA GHOST: The ethereal form taken by a PARTNER during the DAR HEALING RITUAL.
RITUAL LANGUAGE: Terms that relate to an ancient form of DAR combat.
SPIKER WEAVE: A tangle of mega-intensity electro-magnetic power.
VIPER: A bolt of pure, mega-intensity wave energy emanating from a ZONE PERIMETER.
WAVE RIDER BELT: Controls that manipulate the ZONE SUIT'S glide ability by adjusting the fabric's density.
ZONE CONTINUUM: Earth's electro-magnetic envelope of subdivided ZONES ad infinitum. ZONES are affected by distance from the magnetic poles, the natural convective currents of the Earth's molten interior, natural elements and phenomenon, and man-made devices and distortions.
ZONE PERIMETER: The boundary between ZONES composed of intense and unstable energy.
ZONE PERIMETER EDGE FLIRTATION: The act of drawing clarity of mind and optimum psycho-magnetic power.
ZONE SUIT: The protective outer wear of a Partner made of a synthetic lodestone-based polymer. It collects the micro-filament magnetic energy of the CONTINUUM and creates loft for WAVE-GLIDING.
ZONE TECHS: Research and development technicians sequestered in high-security sanctums competing to advance the technology race.
ZONE 27: The specific ZONE that occupies a ten-square mile area of downtown Manhattan above the fifteenth floor.
ZONE WAVES: Rippling magnetic field variations in the form of spherical waves or power oscillations.

THE ZONES RETURN IN MARCH

Story and Art ©1993 Bruce Zick

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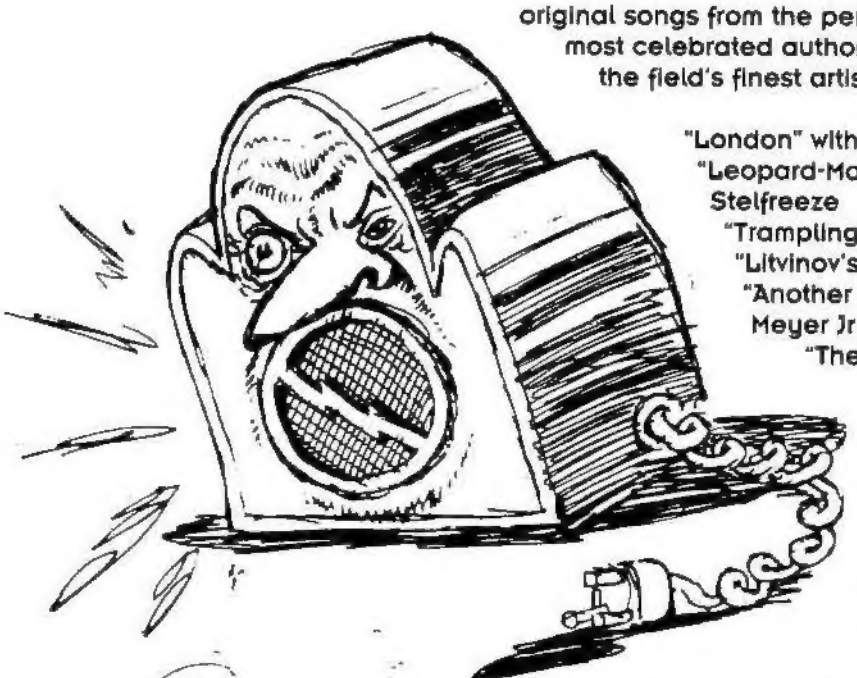
BEGINNING IN NEGATIVE BURN #9!

THE ALAN MOORE SONGBOOK!



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